

HOUSE BILL NO. 265

INTRODUCED BY S. MALEK

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING ACCESS TO THE MONTANA RADIO READING SERVICE AND THE NFB-NEWSLINE SERVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR PHYSICALLY DISABLED; PROVIDING THAT THE MONTANA TALKING BOOK LIBRARY SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROVISIONS OF THE MONTANA RADIO READING SERVICE AND THE NFB-NEWSLINE SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR MONTANA TALKING BOOK LIBRARY PATRONS; ESTABLISHING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, the Montana talking book library has 3,771 eligible patrons constituting the potential patronage of accessible newspaper services in Montana; and

WHEREAS, over 80% of Montana radio reading service listeners are elderly and others have lost their ability to read printed material because of a degenerative disease or physical impairment; and

WHEREAS, the maturing of the baby boomer generation in Montana is increasing the number of potential users of this service every day; and

WHEREAS, full participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political processes of Montana communities depends on ready access to printed news sources, from large-circulation dailies to small-town weeklies.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Purpose. (1) The purpose of [sections 1 through 4] is to expand access to national and state newspapers to all qualifying Montanans who are blind or have physical disabilities presenting barriers to reading printed material by establishing funding for the Montana radio reading service and the NFB-newsline service.

(2) Use of these accessible electronic information systems will enhance the state's current efforts to meet the needs of blind and disabled citizens for access to information that is otherwise only available in print, thereby reducing isolation and supporting full integration and equal access to all individuals.

1 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Definitions.** As used in [sections 1 through 4], the following definitions

2 apply:

3 (1) "Montana association for the blind" means the Montana state affiliate of the national federation of the
4 blind providing advocacy and support for blind individuals and their families.

5 (2) "Montana radio reading service" means a 24-hour closed-circuit radio news and information service
6 provided free of charge to Montanans who are blind, sight-impaired, or otherwise unable to read because of a
7 physical impairment.

8 (3) "Montana talking book library" means a division of the Montana state library that provides library
9 services to individuals with visual and physical disabilities.

10 (4) "NFB-newsline service" means a telephone delivery service, offered through the national federation
11 of the blind, used by blind and physically disabled Americans to access local newspaper content.

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13 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Administration of program.** (1) (a) The Montana radio reading service
14 and the NFB-newsline service are vital information services for individuals throughout the state of Montana who
15 are blind, sight-impaired, or otherwise unable to read because of a physical impairment.

16 (b) Through the Montana radio reading service, patrons have access to live broadcasts of 9 daily and
17 20 weekly and biweekly Montana newspapers over closed-circuit radio.

18 (c) Through the NFB-newsline service, patrons have access to over 250 nationwide newspapers, 3
19 Montana daily newspapers, and several magazines, all in audio format, from their home or cell phone.

20 (2) The Montana association for the blind, the Montana radio reading service, and the Montana talking
21 book library shall cooperate to provide expanded service for the Montana radio reading service and the
22 NFB-newsline service in Montana.

23 (3) (a) The Montana talking book library shall administer service contracts for patrons' access to the
24 Montana radio reading service and the NFB-newsline service in Montana.

25 (b) Individuals wishing to participate in the program shall complete an application with the Montana
26 talking book library.

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28 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Rulemaking authority.** The state library commission shall adopt rules
29 necessary to implement [sections 1 through 4].

NEW SECTION. **Section 5. Appropriation.** (1) There is appropriated \$323,000 from the general fund to the state library commission for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009.

(2) Of the amount appropriated in subsection (1), \$176,000 must be used for the Montana radio reading service and \$147,000 must be used for the NFB-newsline service.

NEW SECTION. Section 6. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 through 4] are intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 22, chapter 1, part 1, and the provisions of Title 22, chapter 1, part 1, apply to [sections 1 through 4].

NEW SECTION. **Section 7. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2009.

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